

KNIGHTS, CITIZENS and BURGESSES
Of the HONOURABLE
HOUSE OF COMMONS

In this present

PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED &c.

The Humble PETITION and CASE of the Poor PRISONERS for DEBT, in the MARSHALSHALL, of the FOUR-COURTS, and the City of Dublin.

Humbly Sheweth.

That this Honourable House, were pleased (on *Saturday* the Twelfth Day of *October* 1695) to order that the Bill prepared by this Honourable House (for Relief and Release of poor Prisoners for Debt) should be presented to his Excellency, the then Lord Deputy, praying it might be drawn into Form and transmitted into *England*,

That the said Bill was transmitted into *England*, without any alterations, (either in Sum or Date) the Sum being 500 *l.* with a proviso that any Person, who was a Prisoner on the 27th of *August* 1695, and did not stand indebted, to any one Person above the said 500 *l.* (Debt and Damages) and not worth 5 *l.* in real or Personal Estate, should be Enlarged, as may more at large appear by the said Bill on Record.

That the said Bill was by the great interest, of your poor Petitioners adversaries, and by the contrivances of the then Deputy Marshal (*Robert Douglas*) and one *Mr. Weston* (Patentee of the Four Courts Marshalsea) laid aside in *England*, so as your poor Petitioners lost the benefit of the said Bill, (tho' most graciously past by this Honourable House, and do still most miserably suffer, by the laying aside the said Bill, many of them being Prisoners for some years before, and still are, who expect no Relief, but by the benefit of the Bill past by this Honourable House.

That your Petitioners finding the said Bill was by the means aforesaid (contrary to the most gracious intent of this Honourable House) mislaid or layd aside, did in *September* 1697. prefer an Humble Petition to this Honourable House, praying the said Bill might be Revived, on which Petition, this Honourable House (being informed by *Allen Broderick Esq;* the Kings Soliciter General, that the said Bill was faulty, and so lay'd aside in *England*) were pleased to draw up the heads of a Second Bill for Release of poor Prisoners, which this Honourable house did (most Generously and Charitably) pass, and were likewise pleased to reduce the Sum from 500 *l.* to 200 *l.* ster. with the proviso aforesaid, by which your poor Petitioners might have the intended benefit of the said Bill.

That the said Bill passed this Honourable House, and was (by Order of this House) preferred to their now Excellencies the Lords Justices, by Alderman *Edward Singleton*, praying the same might be drawn into form and transmitted into *England*.

That their Excellencies did order *Mr. Justice Lyndon* to draw the said Bill into form of Law (it being passed this Honourable House, and their Excellencies in Council, without alterations of Date or Sum)

That pursuant to the said Orders Mr. Justice *Lyndon* did (as your Petitioners believe not only draw the said Bill into form of Law, but to your Petitioners' great expense, and contrary to the gracious intent of this Honourable House) did reduce the said Bill from the Sum of 200*l* to 50*l*, *ster*, by which means your Petitioners are exposed to the merciless mercy of their most unmerciful Creditors.

That the said Bill being reduced as aforesaid, not only in Sum (but also as to the Date in *August 1697*) doth not at all reach the poor Prisoners who were in Prison for some years before neither those (tho' poor) who were committed since *August 1697*, by which alterations made, not above Seventeen Persons can have the benefit tho' there are above Eighty Prisoners now in the Marshalsea, and many of them for several years before, the said 1695, and reduced to that misery, that many of them live only, by the Charity of good Christians, having neither Friends or Substance of their own to Relieve them.

That most of your Petitioners were Persons of Considerable Dealing and Stock, but reduced (by the late Troubles and Calamities) to a most poor Condition; and are Indebted for Sums much exceeding the said Fifty Pounds: yet with God's Blessing, they would in time be able to pay some part (if not the whole) of the Debt due to the Creditors; but are, by their Imprisonment, wholly disabled from either paying their Debts, or any way Relieving themselves or their Families, and will undoubtedly perish, if not by this Honourable House Relieved, by Enlarging the said Sum of Fifty Pounds, to Two hundred Pounds, as this Honourable House did make it; and likewise by altering the date from *August 1697*, many of the said Persons being since Committed, and will inevitably perish, if not by your Honours Relieved.

That your Petitioners most Humbly Conceive, that the altering, and reducing the said Sum of Two hundred pound, to Fifty pound, was no matter of Law, (for which purpose only, the said Bill was given to the said Mr. Justice *Lyndon*) but was by him reduced meerly, to restrict the Merciful and Gracious Bounty of this Honourable House. And your poor Petitioners do really believe, and are confident, that your Honours never designed the said Sum of Two hundred pound, should be reduced by any of the Judges, your Honours having before reduced the said Bill from 500 *l*. to 200 *l*. and your Petitioners humbly Represent to your Honours, that the Prisoners committed since (1697) cannot have the benefit thereof, by reason the date was not altered (tho' the Sum was) and are thereby exposed to the Mercy of their inexorable Creditors.

That your Petitioners do most humbly lay before this Honourable House, that the said Bill (as now it is) can be no Relief for Prisoners, the Sum being altered, as aforesaid, the date being in *August 1697*. and now Fourteen Months almost expired.

May it therefore please your Honours, (in Commiseration of your poor Petitioners' Deplorable Condition, and Poverty) to take the Case of the poor prisoners into Consideration, and to Enlarge the said Sum from 50 *l*. to 200 *l*. And also that your Honours may be pleased to alter the date of the said Bill, whereby the poor Prisoners before the year 1695, (that are still in Prison) the Prisoners from 1695, to 1697, and the Prisoners since Committed, to this present time, may have, and enjoy the Benefit of the said Bill, as it was designed, and prepared by this Honourable House. And your Petitioners will ever Pray.



